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ABSTRACT

In order to validate the methodology used in the study by Jose-Marie Griffith and Donald W. King that is reported in "New Directions in Library and Information Science Education," this study examined the management competencies of middle managers in 11 large academic research libraries in the Midwest. The goals of the project were to provide a profile of the managerial competencies observed in research librarians who are acknowledged to be top performers and to suggest a competency model for academic middle managers, i.e., those in the management hierarchy above the level of supervisor and below the level of vice president. Three middle managers judged to be average in performance and three judged to be superior were interviewed at each of the 11 locations, and they were requested to narrate three positive and three negative experiences in which they had utilized management principles. A taxonomy was prepared from these narratives, using 12 subject headings (e.g., staffing, planning, organizing, communications) by which to analyze the "critical incidents" reported, and the data were analyzed to determine specific activities and attitudes that characterize the superior middle manager. These data are then compared to those gathered from academic libraries in the study by Griffith and King, who surveyed only the superior performers in selected regions, and asked for only positive experiences. It is concluded that the study reported here is a step in developing models for evaluating the work of middle managers in large academic research libraries, whereas the Griffith and King study represents one approach to developing models for evaluating the qualifications of library/information professionals for their positions in library/information organizations. One figure and 11 tables are appended. (14 references) (SD)

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MANAGEMENT COMPETENCIES OF MIDDLE MANAGERS IN LARGE ACADEMIC RESEARCH LIBRARIES

Full text of paper

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MANAGEMENT COMPETENCIES OF

MIDDLE MANAGERS

IN LARGE ACADEMIC RESEARCH LIBRARIES

Abstract

One of the more controversial studies that has been conducted in the library/information field in recent years is New Directions in Library and Information Science Education, by Jose-Marie Griffith and Donald W. King (White Plains, N. Y.: Knowledge Industry, 1986). Under contract to the U. S. Department of Education, the authors examined the competencies required for professionals at three levels of experience: entry level, mid-level, and senior level. The study provides detailed data for academic, public, special, and other types of libraries/information organizations.

Marcy Murphy and Martha Bailey received a grant from the Council on Library Resources to validate the methodology used by King Research, Inc. They examined the management competencies of middle managers in eleven large academic research libraries in the Midwest. The authors interviewed three middle managers judged to be "average" in performance and three judged "superior" in performance at each location. The King study surveyed only the "superior" performers.

The present authors employed the "critical incident" method in their interviews. In this technique the subjects are requested to narrate experiences in which they utilized management principles, some of which had positive effects and others negative effects. The interviewers then drew inferences from these data. The King study examined only positive "critical incidents."

The data have been analyzed to determine specific activities and attitudes that characterize the superior middle manager in eleven large academic research libraries. The data are compared to those management data gathered from academic libraries in the King study.

MANAGEMENT COMPETENCIES OF

MIDDLE MANAGERS

IN LARGE ACADEMIC RESEARCH LIBRARIES

One of the more controversial studies that has been conducted in the library/information field in recent years is New Directions in Library and Information Science Education, by Jose-Marie Griffith and Donald W. King (1). Under contract to the U. S. Department of Education, King Research, Inc. examined the competencies required for professionals at three levels of experience: entry level, mid-level, and senior level. The study provides detailed data for the knowledges, skills, and attitudes required in academic, public, special, and other types of library/information organizations.

Prof. Marcy Murphy and I received a grant from the Council on Library Resources to validate the methodology used by King (2). We examined the management competencies of middle managers in eleven large academic research libraries in the Midwest (3).

Research Project

The goals of the project were to provide a profile of the managerial competencies observed in research librarians who are acknowledged top performers and to suggest a competency model for academic middle managers. First, let us define some terms. Middle managers are defined as those people in the management hierarchy above the level of supervisor and below the level of vice president; they usually are department heads or in charge of specific functions within the organization (4).

Competencies often are thought of in terms of either minimal or optimal. David McClelland defines competencies, not as aspects of a job,

but as the characteristics of people who do the job best (5). In addition, the purpose of competency studies is to develop competency models, which are decision models that describe the key capabilities required to perform a job. McLagen proposes a 20/80 rule in which 80 percent of the important actions for successful job performance are controlled by 20 percent of the competencies used in the job (6).

Many authors define competencies as being composed of three components: knowledges, skills, and attitudes. Quoting the King study:

> Knowledge is having information about, knowing, understanding, being acquainted with, being aware of, having experience of, or being familiar with something, someone, or how to do something...
>
> Skill is the ability to use one's knowledge effectively...
>
> Attitude is a mental or emotional approach to something or someone....(7)

The authors interviewed three middle managers judged to be "average" in performance and three judged "superior" in performance at each of the eleven locations. The King study surveyed only the "superior" performers in selected regions.

King chose the "critical incident" method in which the researcher asks the individual to relate incidents which have occurred (8). The investigator then develops a taxonomy from these narrations or compares them to a taxonomy which already exists. At the time that we prepared our report for Council on Library Resources, King had not provided information

about their taxonomy; therefore, we developed our own to meet CLR's deadline for our report.

Other ways in which our study differed from King's is that King interviewed only high achievers, the superior performers. In our project we interviewed six middle managers at each of the eleven locations. Due to the time limitations, we asked the library directors to select three average middle managers and three superior middle managers for us to interview. We asked that we not be told who the superior people were until after the interviews. Prof. Murphy interviewed the people at Purdue and I the ones at Indiana University. Another way in which our study differed is that King requested the subjects to relate only positive incidents while we asked each person to narrate three positive and three negative incidents.

Since King had not yet provided a taxonomy, we prepared, based on our literature search, a list of twelve subject headings by which to analyze the incidents. These consist of the usual topics of staffing, planning, communications, etc. (Figure 1). We assigned one subject category to each incident. The superior middle managers (Table 1) reported 98 positive incidents (an average of 3.2 per person) and 50 negative (an average of 1.6). The 32 average middle managers (Table 2) reported 88 positive incidents (or 2.8 incidents per person) and 56 negative (1.8 per person). We found that people could quickly relate two or three positive incidents, but most found it difficult to remember more than one negative incident.

Our analysis indicated that the area of "personnel" by far dominated both the positive and negative critical incidents for both the superior and the average middle managers. This was followed by the categories of "organizing," "communication," and "control."

Critical Incidents

What are these incidents which are so critical? People narrate, often at great length, projects, events, triumphs, or mistakes that occurred in their careers. Some examples of incidents which they considered positive use of management principles, are, greatly condensed:

> In a branch library the teaching department, after long negotiation, paid one-half the cost of an IBM-PC for the branch.
>
> The branch was assigned to provide library instruction for 600 students. The branch head developed a plan to divide the 600 into groups of five. The library staff taught one person in each group of five, and that person taught the other four.
>
> Both the branch library and the acquisitions department of the library system are using the Faxon DATALINK system. The groups meet weekly to exchange experiences and to solve problems.
>
> A clerical employee had a personal problem at home, and became very angry at work. The department head and the employee together were able to work through this problem.

Some examples of incidents which the interviewees considered to be negative are, greatly condensed:

The department head failed to recognize that an employee's problems at home were interfering with her work when he fired a clerical employee. The employee sued him, but the library was able to win the suit. He should have sought advice from his adminstrators before taking action.

A clerical employee has worked for the library for 20 years. The department head tried to avoid a confrontation by transferring her to another department several years previously. Now, as the result of reorganizations, he has the employee in his group again. Perhaps her problems are mental.

Follow-Up Study

Later when King published the twelve books of data which supplement the monograph New Directions...(9), we analyzed again our data, using King's taxonomy, for six of the eleven sites (10). This time we assigned as many subject categories as were needed to define the incident. The superior middle managers (Table 3) had 51 positive incidents (2.8 per person) and 29 negative (1.6 per person). The average middle managers (Table 4) had 49 positive incidents (or 2.7 per person) and 37 negative (2.1)

The new analysis resulted in a different interpretation of the data. Whereas the data for the superior middle managers at eleven sites (Table 5) emphasized the categories of "personnel," "organizing," and "control" for the positive incidents, the data for the six sites emphasized "staffing and personnel management," "communication," "organizing and reorganizing," and "control." The analysis of the negative incidents for

the superior middle managers was the same in each case: personnel and communication.

The data for the two analyses of the average middle managers (Table 6) resulted in the same categories in slightly different order for the positive incidents. The data for the eleven sites was in "personnel," "organizing," and"control," while those for the six sites were "staffing and personnel management," "control," and "organizing and reorganizing." The negative responses also resulted in a slightly different configuration for the average middle managers: "personnel," "organization," and "communication" for the eleven sites and "staffing and personnel management," "communication," and "control" for the six sites.

Since the King taxonomy provided clusters of subjects, it permitted us to pinpoint some specific areas (Tables 7-11) that were causing successes and failures. For example, in the category "staffing and personnel management" the dominant sub-categories were

Hiring and firing

Motivating

General administration

Staff development

In the category "communication" the dominant ones were

Communication with management and/or governing authority

Interpersonal, with peers and staff

However, we must caution placing undue dependence upon these data. We are looking at a very small sample from, in some cases, fairly homogeneous groups of people who are working in similar situations. Many are attending the same classes, seminars, and workshops as their colleagues.

We must remember that these are data from only six libraries.

We were looking for some clues which would clearly indicate what made these superior middle managers superior. We speculated that perhaps it was the attitude of these people. Prof. Murphy and I were surprised that 78% of the negative responses involving communication for the superior middle managers were listed under interpersonal communication (Table 11). We reasoned that, although their administrators rated them superior in performance, the interviewees possessed such high standards for their own performance that they were concerned about each of their communication failures. The high negative ranking for time management, 83%, also might reflect their intense consciousness of their responsibilities. When we were interviewing people, although we did not know in advance who the superior people were, Prof. Murphy and I often were able to identify them. When listening to the tapes later, the quality, whatever it is, was not identifiable as it was in face to face conversation.

King validated their lists of knowledges, skills, and attitudes by sending them to a review panel and by sending them to hundreds of people who wished to participate in the exercise. The list of attitudes which we contributed to King's report is included in our report to the Council on Library Resources (11), but it is too lengthy to include here.

Conclusion

We regard our study as a step in developing models for evaluating the work of middle managers in large academic research libraries. We were unable to test the methodology because the information was not available at the time we submitted our report. In our report (12) and in my book

The Special Librarian as A Supervisor or Middle Manager (13) we have listed the studies that have been reported on the qualifications of library/information professionals in all types of job situations. These studies are being conducted currently; the May 1988 issue of College & Research Libraries contains an article on career paths for academic librarians (14).

The King study consists of an analysis of a very small population of "superior" performers based on positive critical incidents. Therefore, we consider it one approach to developing models for evaluating the qualifications of library/information professionals for their positions in library/information organizations.

References

1. Jose-Marie Griffith and Donald W. King. New Directions in Library and Information Science Education. (White Plains, N. Y.: Knowledge Industry, 1986)
2. Marcy Murphy and Martha J. Bailey. "An Investigation of the Managerial Competencies of Research Librarians," Grant report no. 3-007K. (Washington, D. C.: Council on Library Resources, Jan. 1986. 81 p.) (ED 277 372)
3. The libraries are University of Chicago, University of Illinois, Indiana University, University of Iowa, Michigan State University, Northwestern University, University of Notre Dame, Ohio State University, Pennsylvania State University, Purdue University, and University of Wisconsin.
4. Martha J. Bailey. "Middle Managers in Libraries/Information Services." Library Administration & Management 1: 139-143 (September 1987)
5. David C. McClelland. "Testing for Competence Rather Than Intelligence." American Psychologist 28: 1-14 (January 1973)
6. Patricia McLagen. "Competency Models." Training and Development Journal. 35: 22-26 (December 1980)
7. Griffith, New Directions in Library and Information Science Education, p. 31-33
8. John Flanagan. "The Critical Incident Technique." Psychological Bulletin 51: 327-358 (July 1954)
9. Jose-Marie Griffith. "New Directions in Library and Information Science Education; Final Report." (Rockville MD: King Research, Inc., 1984. 12 v.)
10. The six sites were University of Chicago, University of Illinois, Indiana University, Northwestern University, Ohio State University, and University of Wisconsin.

11. Murphy, "An Investigation of the Managerial Competencies of Research Librarians," p. 45-47.

12. Murphy, "An Investigation of the Managerial Competencies of Research Librarians." p. 26-27

13. Martha J. Bailey. The Special Librarian as a Supervisor or Middle Manager. 2nd ed. (Washington, D. C.: Special Libraries Association, 1986, p.91-92)

14. Leslie M. Kong and R. A. H. Goodfellow. "Charting a Career Path in the Information Professions." College & Research Libraries 49: 207-216 (May 1988)

FIGURE 1. SUBJECT HEADINGS

01 GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

02 PHYSICAL FACILITIES: includes buildings, supplies, equipment, etc.

03 COMMUNICATIONS: organizational, interpersonal, etc.

04 PLANNING: techniques, formal plans, MBO, policy and procedure formulation, etc.

05 CONTROL: work process, analysis and design, budget, financial management, evaluation, etc.

06 ORGANIZING: units, jobs, procedures, etc.

07 STAFFING: hiring and firing, job descriptions, performance evaluation, collective bargaining, etc.

08 PERSONNEL: management, motivation, leadership, staff development, etc.

09 RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

10 MARKETING AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

11 DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

12 OTHER

Table 1. ACTIVITIES

SUPERIOR MIDDLE MANAGERS (N = 31) (11 libraries)

No. of Incidents	Positive	Rank	No. of Incidents	Negative
27	Personnel	1	23	Personnel
19	Organization	2	10	Communication
18	Control	3	6	Organization
11	Staffing	4	5	Control
9	Planning	5	3	Staffing
8	Communication	6	2	Planning
2	General Administration	7	1	General Administration
2	Physical facilities			
1	Marketing...	8		
1	Other			
98			50	
Av	(3.2)		Av	(1.6)

Table 2. ACTIVITIES

AVERAGE MIDDLE MANAGERS (N = 32) (11 libraries)

No. of Incidents	Positive	Rank	No. of Incidents	Negative
26	Personnel	1	19	Personnel
18	Organizing	2	10	Organizing
13	Control	3	9	Communication
11	Planning	4	5	Marketing...
9	Staffing	5	4	Staffing
3	Marketing...	6	3	Planning
3	Communication		3	Control
2	Physical facilities	7	1	General Administration
2	R & D		1	R & D
			1	Development
1	Other	8		
88			56	
Av	(2.8)		Av	(1.8)

Table 3.ACTIVITIES

SUPERIOR MIDDLE MANAGERS (N = 18) (6 libraries)

No. of Competencies	Positive	Rank	No. of Competencies	Negative
31	Staffing & Personnel Management	1	25	Staffing & Personnel Management
20	Communication	2	18	Communication
15	Organizing & Reorganizing	3	6	Control
15	Control			
5	Planning	4	4	Planning
3	Physical Facilities	5	1	Organizing & Reorganizing
			1	Research & Development
			1	Marketing & Public Relations
1	Research & Development	6		
1	Other			
91	for 51 incidents		56	for 29 incidents
AV	2.8			1.6

Table 4. ACTIVITIES

AVERAGE MIDDLE MANAGERS (N = 18) (6 libraries)

No. of Competencies	Positive	Rank	No. of Competencies	Negative
23	Staffing & Personnel Management	1	27	Staffing & Personnel Management
16	Control	2	12	Communication
10	Organizing & Reorganizing	3	10	Control
9	Communication	4	4	Organizing & Reorganizing
8	Planning	5	3	Planning
5	Resaarch & Development	6	2	Marketing & Public Relations
3	Physical Facilities	7	1	Physical Facilities
			1	Other
74	for 49 incidents		60	for 37 incidents
AV	2.7			2.1

Table 5. ACTIVITIES

SUPERIOR MIDDLE MANAGERS

POSITIVE

N = 31 (11 libraries)		Rank	N = 18 (6 libraries)	
27	Personnel	1	31	Staffing & Personnel Management
19	Organizing	2	20	Communication
18	Control	3	15	Organizing & Reorganizing
			15	Control
11	Staffing	4	5	Planning
9	Planning	5	3	Physical Facilities
8	Communication	6	1	Research & Development
			1	Other
2	General Administration	7		
2	Physical Facilities			
1	Marketing & Public Relations	8		
1	Other			
98	incidents		91	competencies for 51 incidents

NEGATIVE

23	Personnel	1	25	Staffing & Personnel Management
10	Communication	2	18	Communication
6	Organizing	3	6	Control
5	Control	4	4	Planning
3	Staffing	5	1	Organizing & Reorganizing
			1	Marketing & Public Relations
			1	Physical Facilities
2	Planning	6		
1	General Administration	7		
50	incidents		56	competencies for 29 incidents

Table 6. ACTIVITIES

AVERAGE MIDDLE MANAGERS

POSITIVE

N = 32 (11 libraries)		Rank	N = 18 (6 libraries)	
26	Personnel	1	23	Staffing & Personnel Management
18	Organizing	2	16	Control
13	Control	3	10	Organizing & Reorganizing
11	Planning	4	9	Communication
9	Staffing	5	8	Planning
3	Marketing & Public Relations	6	5	Research & Development
3	Communications			
2	Physical Facilities	7	3	Physical Facilities
2	Research & Development			
1	Other	8		
88	incidents		74	competencies for 49 incidents

NEGATIVE

19	Personnel	1	27	Staffing & Personnel Management
10	Organization	2	12	Communication
9	Communication	3	10	Control
5	Marketing & Public Relations	4	4	Organizing & Reorganizing
4	Staffing	5	3	Planning
3	Planning	6	2	Marketing & Public Relations
3	Control			
1	General Administration	7	1	Physical Facilities
1	Research & Development		1	Other
56	incidents		60	competencies for 37 incidents

Table 7

SUPERIOR MIDDLE MANAGERS

BREAKDOWN - POSITIVE RESPONSES

31 Staffing and Personnel Management
- 9 Hiring and firing
- 2 Job descriptions
- 1 Collective bargaining
- 7 Motivating
- 3 General administration - record keeping, etc
- 1 Delegating
- 1 MBO
- 5 Staff development
- 1 Evaluation of personnel
- 1 Self management

20 Communication
- 4 With users and community
- 5 With management and/or governing authority
- 8 Interpersonal, with peers and staff
- 2 Counseling
- 1 Negotiating and conflict resolution

15 Organizing and reorganizing, to implement plans
- 7 Units
- 3 Jobs
- 5 Procedures

15 Control
- 9 Work process design
- 5 Financial management (designing and implementing budget)
- 1 Evaluation of organization

5 Planning
- 4 Tactical (short term or operational; prioritizing and conforming to organizational goals
- 1 Analysis of current trends inside organization

Table 7 (continued)

SUPERIOR MIDDLE MANAGERS

BREAKDOWN - POSITIVE RESPONSES (continued)

3 Physical facilities
  2 Remodeling a department
  1 Decorating
1 Research & Development
  1 Research analysis skills (quantitative: statistical skills, systems analysis, etc.)
1 Other

Table 8

SUPERIOR MIDDLE MANAGERS

BREAKDOWN - NEGATIVE RESPONSES

25 Staffing and Personnel Management
- 5 Hiring and firing
- 7 Motivating
- 7 General administration - record keeping, etc.
- 4 Staff development
- 1 Evaluation of personnel
- 1 Other

18 Communication
- 1 With users and community
- 3 With management and/or governing authority
- 14 Interpersonal, with peers and staff

6 Control
- 1 Work process design
- 5 Time management

4 Planning
- 2 Strategic (long term) goal setting)
- 2 Tactical (short term or operational; prioitizing and conforming to organizational goals)

1 Organizing and reorganizing, to implement plans
- 1 Jobs

1 Research & Development
- 1 Other

1 Marketing & Public Relations
- 1 External

Table 9

AVERAGE MIDDLE MANAGERS

BREAKDOWN - POSITIVE RESPONSES

23 Staffing and Personnel Management
- 3 Hiring and firing
- 3 Job descriptions
- 3 Motivating
- 3 General administration - record keeping, etc.
- 3 Delegating
- 6 Staff development
- 1 Evaluation of personnel
- 1 Self management

16 Control
- 13 Work process design
- 2 Financial management (designing and implementing budget)
- 1 Time management

10 Organizing and reorganizing, to implement plans
- 3 Units
- 7 Procedures

9 Communication
- 3 With users and community
- 1 With managment and/or governing authority
- 4 Interpersonal, with peers and staff
- 1 Counseling

8 Planning
- 1 Strategic (long term) goal setting)
- 6 Tactical (short term or operational; prioritizing and conforming to organizational goals)
- 1 Policies and procedures formulation

Table 9 (continued)

AVERAGE MIDDLE MANAGERS

BREAKDOWN - POSITIVE RESPONSES (continued)

5 Research & Development
- 3 Identification & submission of proposals to a variety of sources
- 1 Design of instruments to assess needs (users, staff...)
- 1 Publication of articles and books or series

3 Physical facilities
- 1 Remodeling a department
- 1 Decorating
- 1 Remodeling for technology (supplies and equipment)

Table 10

AVERAGE MIDDLE MANAGERS

BREAKDOWN - NEGATIVE RESPONSES

27 Staffing and Personnel Management
- 1 Hiring and firing
- 2 Job descriptions
- 1 Collective bargaining
- 6 Motivating
- 7 General administration - record keeping, etc.
- 2 Delegating
- 3 Staff development
- 3 Evaluation of personnel
- 2 Self management

12 Communication
- 3 With users and community
- 1 With management and/or governing authority
- 6 Interpersonal, with peers and staff
- 1 Counseling
- 1 Negotiating and conflict resolution

10 Control
- 2 Work process design
- 3 Financial management (designing & implementingb budget)
- 1 Evaluation of organization
- 4 Time management

4 Organizing and reorganizing, to implement plans
- 2 Units
- 2 Procedures

3 Planning
- 2 Tactical (short term or operational; prioritizing and conforming to organizational goals)
- 1 Policies and procedures formulation

Table 10 (continued)

AVERAGE MIDDLE MANAGERS

BREAKDOWN - NEGATIVE RESPONSES (continued)

2 Marketing & Public Relations
  2 External
1 Physical facilities
  1 Remodeling for technology (supplies and equipment)
1 Other

Table 11. SELECTED CATEGORIES

	Superior		Average	
	Pos.	Neg.	Pos.	Neg.
Staffing and personnel management				
Hiring and firing	29%	20%	-	-
Motivating	23	28	-	22
General administration	-	28	-	26
Staff development	16	-	26	-
Communication				
With management and/or governing authority	25	-	-	-
Interpersonal, with peers and staff	40	78	-	50
Organizing and reorganizing, to implement plans				
Units	47	-	-	-
Procedures	33	-	70	-
Control				
Work process design	60	-	81	-
Financial management	33	-	-	-
Time management	-	83	-	-